

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 117538
ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 EB-07 /038 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ECP:DTAHER:PAM
APPROVED BY ARA/ECP:JO'MAHONY
ARA/AND/C:DCOX (DRAFT)
L/ARA:GCHESTER (INFO)
ARA/PAN:DWAGNER (INFO)

-----212132Z 126438 /66

R 211207Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 117538

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: EAGR, ELTN, CO

SUBJECT:US POLICY TOWARD DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY

REF: BOGOTA 3568

1. THE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES EMBASSY'S ANALYSIS OF PRESENT POLICY MIX ON DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY AND SUGGESTIONS ON MODIFYING THIS POLICY TO PERMIT SOME HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA. WE CONCUR IN EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT POSTURE OF THE FMD PROGRAM AND THE NECESSITY TO FURTHER LINK THE POSSIBILITY OF HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION WITH PROGRESS IN FMD CONTROL. AS THE EMBASSY IS AWARE, THE US DISTRICT COURT INJUNCTION IS NOT THE ONLY IMPEDIMENT TO HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 117538

2. PRESENT NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL POLICY GUIDELINES ON DGH REAFFIRM THE US COMMITMENT TO ASSIST COLOMBIA TO BUILD ITS PORTION OF THE DGH. HOWEVER, THESE GUIDELINES ENJOIN EVEN THE ADVERTISING OF BIDS FOR HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA UNTIL AFTER THE FMD CONTROL PROGRAM IS IN PLACE AND JUDGED EFFECTIVE FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF THE SITU-

ATION BY USDA. WE HAVE THUS BEEN STYMIED IN FULFILLING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE HIGHWAY THROUGH LACK OF ADEQUATE PROGRESS IN THE FMD PROGRAM. WE HAVE NOTED AS WELL, IN LINE WITH COMMENTS IN PARA 8 REFTL, THAT THE DGH MAY NOT BE HIGH IN THE GOC'S ROAD PRIORITY LIST, AND THAT THE GOC'S MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION HAS BEEN EITHER INEFFECTIVE OR UNWILLING TO GET THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO ASSIGN A HIGHER PRIORITY TO THE FMD EFFORT. CONSEQUENTLY, STIMULATING THE FMD PROGRAM BY MODIFYING USG POLICY TO PERMIT SOME HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN AS SOON AS THE INJUNCTION IS LIFTED DEPENDS TO A LARGE DEGREE ON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE GOC TO ASSIGN A HIGHER PRIORITY TO THE DGH AND TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WILLINGNESS BY ASSIGNING A HIGHER PRIORITY TO THE FMD PROGRAM.

3. WE HAVE DISCUSSED ASPECTS OF THE EMBASSY'S OPTION THREE WITH USDA POLICY LEVEL OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH THE COLOMBIAN FMD PROGRAM. THESE OFFICIALS STATED THAT THE USDA HAS NEVER PASSED JUDGMENT ON THE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF THE DGH. THEY AGREE THAT IT MAY BE IN THE OVERALL USG INTEREST TO SEE A DGH BUILT WITH OUR ASSISTANCE AND TAKING THE FMD THREAT FULLY INTO ACCOUNT. AS THE EMBASSY POINTS OUT, IT WOULD BE SELF DEFEATING TO ALLOW THE DGH TO BE COMPLETED WITHOUT ADEQUATE FMD SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE. WHILE CONCEDING THAT SOME PROGRESS IN CONTROLLING FMD HAS BEEN MADE TO DATE, USDA OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED OVER THE RATE OF PROGRESS IN THE FMD PROGRAM WHICH THEY ATTRIBUTE TO THE LACK OF COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE GOC. THIS LACK OF COMMITMENT IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE GOC'S FAILURE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 117538

TO AGREE TO AN EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE THAT WOULD ALLOW THE FMD PROGRAM TO PERFORM ADEQUATELY. USDA OFFICIALS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE "CARROT" OF LIMITED HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION, SPECIFICALLY THE 30 KILOMETER PORTION BETWEEN RIO LEON TO LOMOS LAS AISLADAS, MIGHT BE SWALLOWED WITHOUT ACHIEVING THE DESIRED RESULT. TO PREVENT THIS FROM OCCURRING, USDA INSISTS THAT A GOC COMMITMENT TO REVISE THE FMD PROGRAM ACCOMPANY THE OFFER TO ALLOW LIMITED HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION. IN EFFECT, USDA BELIEVES THAT THIS COMMITMENT MUST BE INCORPORATED IN A NEW GOC/USDA FMD AGREEMENT. THE NEW AGREEMENT WOULD SPECIFY THE TYPE OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE TO CARRY OUT THE PROGRAM. OF NECESSITY, THIS ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE WOULD CONSIST OF A "JOINT COMMISSION" OR OTHER TYPE OF AUTONOMOUS BODY HAVING DIRECT CONTROL OVER ITS FINANCES AND PERSONNEL. IF THE ABOVE CONDITIONS ARE MET, USDA WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER JOINING WITH STATE AND DOT TO REQUEST MODIFICATION OF THE PRESENT NSC POLICY GUIDELINES TO PERMIT DGH CONSTRUCTION ALONG THE LINES PROPOSED BY THE EMBASSY. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED

THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CAN THE ABOVE BE CONSTRUED AS SUPPORT FOR THE GOC PROPOSAL FOR A VASTLY EXPANDED FMD PROGRAM ALONG THE LINES PROPOSED AT THE TECHNICAL EXPERTS MEETING IN FEBRUARY.

4. COMMENT: WE DO NOT BELEIVE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A MODIFICTION OF THE NSC POLICY DIRECTIVE WITHOUT USDA COOPERATION. THEY ARE CLEARLY WORRIED OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION COULD TAKE PLACE WITH THEIR ACQUIESCENCE WITHOUT ACHIEVEING THE AGREED UPON MODIFICATIONS IN THE FMD PROGRAM. PROMINENT AMERICAN VETERINARIANS HAVE ATTACKED THE DGH PROJECT AS AN FMD THREAT AND HAVE SO WRITTEN TO THE CONGRESS. USDA OFFICIALS UNDOUBTEDLY BELIEVE THEY MUST PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM POSSIBLE ACCUSATIONS OF HAVING ENDANGERED THE US LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY BY PERMITTING THIS LIMITED HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 117538

ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY GOC REACTION TO THIS PROPOSAL IF WE WERE TO PRESENT IT AT THE NEXT SENIOR REVIEW GROUP MEETING. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE EMBASSY VIEWS ON NEED TO ACQUAINT HIGHER LEVEL OF GOC TO US PROPOSAL AND PREFERRED MEANS FOR DOING SO. CHRISTOPHER

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